

Sūrah As-Sajdah

[The Prostration]

Sūrah As-Sajdah is Makkī. It has 30 Verses and 10 Sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Verses 1 - 3

الَمْ ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۚ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَتْهُمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ
مَنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣﴾

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the All-Merciful

Alif Lām Mīm. [1] (This) revelation of the Book - wherein there is no doubt - is from the Lord of the worlds. [2] Or, is it that they say, "he has fabricated it." On the contrary, it is the truth from your Lord, so that you warn a people to whom no warner has come before you; may be they take the right path. [3]

Commentary

At this place, the word: نَذِيرٍ (*nadhīr*: warner) in: مَا أَتَتْهُمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ (to whom no warner has come.. -3) means a *rasūl* or messenger. The sense is that no messenger had appeared amidst the Quraish of Makkah before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This does not mean that the call of the messengers had just not reached them until that time, because it was clearly said in another verse of the Qur'an: وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ (And there was no community without a warner having passed among them - 35:24). In this verse, (i.e. the verse 35:24) the word: نَذِيرٍ (*warnar*) appears in its general lexical sense, that is, one who calls people towards Allah, whether a messenger or prophet or one of their deputies, *khalīfah* or the *‘ālim* of *dīn*. So, from this verse, it seems that the call of pure monotheism (*tauḥīd*) had reached all

communities and groups. That is correct in its place and certainly the dictate of universal Divine mercy. Commentator Abū Ḥayyān says that the call to *tauḥīd* and *īmān* has never ceased in any time or place or people. And wherever a long time passed after the appearance of a prophet, it resulted in the dearth of those having the knowledge of the legacy of prophethood. Thereupon, some new prophet or messenger was sent. This requires that the call to *tauḥīd* should have reached the Arab peoples definitely, and much earlier. But, for this it is not necessary that the call should have been brought in by some prophet or messenger in person. It is possible that it may have reached through the learned serving as deputies to the prophetic mission. Therefore, the verses of this Sūrah, Sūrah Yā Sīn and others which prove that no *nadhīr* (warner) had appeared amidst the Quraish of Arabia before the Holy Prophet ﷺ must be approached with the necessary consideration that the word: نذير (*nadhīr*) used there should mean a prophet and messenger in the technical sense denoting that no prophet and messenger had come amidst those people before the Holy Prophet ﷺ - even though, the call to *tauḥīd* and *īmān* may have reached there too through other means.

Before the period of *fatrah*, that is, before the appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it stands proved about some blessed souls who firmly adhered to the faith of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl عليهما السلام. They believed in the Oneness of Allah and were averse to the worship of and sacrifices for idols.

Ruḥ-ul-Ma'ānī reports from the Maghāzī of Mūsā Ibn 'Uqbah about one such person whose name was Zayd Ibn 'Amr Ibn Nufayl. He had also met the Holy Prophet ﷺ before he was ordained as a prophet. But, it was still before his prophethood that he died in the year the Quraish had built the edifice of the Baytullah - and this happened five years prior to his prophethood. About him, Mūsā Ibn 'Uqbah says, 'He used to stop the Quraish from indulging in the worship of idols. He opposed the offering of sacrifices in the name of idols as an evil practice and would not eat the meat from animals slaughtered by the Mushriks.'

Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālīsī has reported from Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Zayd Ibn Amr رضي الله عنه, the son of Zayd Ibn 'Amr Ibn Nufayl, one of the celebrated ten (عشرة مبشرة) among the noble Ṣaḥābah, that he had submitted before the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying: "You already know about my father that he

adhered to pure monotheism and rejected idolatry. Can I, then, pray for his forgiveness?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Yes, for him the prayer of forgiveness is permissible. He will, on the day of Qiyāmah, rise as a community of his own." (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī)

Similarly, Warqah Ibn Nawfal ؓ who was present during the initial period of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'ān was an adherent of pure monotheism (*tauḥīd*). He had expressed his resolve to help the Holy Prophet ﷺ but he died soon after. These examples prove that the people of Arabia were though not totally deprived of the Divine call to faith and monotheism, but that no prophet had appeared amidst them as such. Allah knows best.

All three verses cited above carry an affirmation of the veracity of the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam.

Verses 4 - 9

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ ۚ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤﴾ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ ﴿٥﴾ ذَلِكَ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٦﴾ الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهُ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ مَّاءٍ مَّهِينٍ ﴿٨﴾ ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُّوحِهِ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

Allah is the One who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, then He positioned Himself on the Throne. Other than Him, there is neither a guardian for you, nor an intercessor. Would you then not observe the advice? [4] He manages (every) matter from the sky to the earth, then it (every matter) will ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is a thousand years according to the way you

count. [5] That One is the All-knower of the unseen and the seen; the All-Mighty, the Very-Merciful, [6] who made well whatever He created and started the creation of man from clay. [7] Then He made his progeny from a drop of semen, from a despised water. [8] Then He gave him a proportioned shape and breathed into him of His spirit. And He granted you the (power of) hearing and the eyes and the hearts. Little you give thanks. [9]

Commentary

The length of the day of Qiyāmah

The text in verse 5 cited above says: فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعْلُونَ (in a day the measure of which is a thousand years according to the way you count - 5). And it appears in a verse of Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij: ... (in a day the extent of which is fifty thousand years - 70:4).

A simple explanation of this is what appears in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān - since this day will be horrendous, people would find it very long. Then, this length will be felt in terms of one's measure of faith and deeds. Big criminals will find the day longer while the small ones will find it comparatively shorter, so much so that the day some would feel to be of a thousand years, to others, it would appear as of fifty thousand years.

Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī reports several other explanations from the 'Ulamā' and Sūfiyā'. But, all these are nothing but conjectures. Something which can be traced back to a proved meaning of the Qur'ān or something which can be believed in is just not there. Therefore, the most sound approach in this matter is the same as was taken by the early elders of Islam, the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'in: They had left the knowledge of this difference of one and fifty to Allah without explaining it on the basis of human whims and, on their part, they had found it sufficient to say, 'we do not know.'

About it, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said:

هُمَا يَوْمَانِ ذَكَرَهُمَا اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِي كِتَابِهِ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَعْلَمُ بِهِمَا وَأَكْرَهُ أَنْ أَقُولَ فِي
كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا أَعْلَمُ

They are two days mentioned by Allah Ta'ālā in His Book. Allah Ta'ālā knows best about them and I dislike to say in the matter of the Book of Allah that which I do not know.

Everything is good in this world. Evil comes through its wrong use.

In verse 7, it was said: "الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ": Who made well whatever He created good. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has made whatever He has created in this world under the dictate of His wisdom, and under the essential consideration of what is beneficial for the whole system. Therefore, everything has a beauty of its own. And the most beautiful and better than all is the making of man as it was said: لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ (Surely, We did create man in the best of symmetry - 95:4).

Then there are creations other than man that may outwardly be taken as bad. In fact, dogs, pigs, snakes, scorpions and wolves are commonly considered bad because they are either poisonous or beastly. But, in terms of the expedient benefits of the world as a whole, none of these is really bad. A proverbial poetic observation in Urdu puts it as:

نہیں ہے چیز نکی کوئی زمانے میں.....☆..... کوئی بُرائییں قدرت کے کارخانے میں

There is nothing useless in the world
There is no one bad in the workshop of nature.

The author of Bayān ul-Qur'ān has said, 'the text's كُلُّ شَيْءٍ (whatever) includes all substances and accidents, that is, also things which have corporeal substance, such as, animals, plants and minerals etc. as well as incorporeal things which include even morals and deeds. So much so that morals which are identified as bad - anger, greed, desire and their likes - are not bad in themselves. The bad about them emerges when they are used out of place. If they stay in their proper place, there is nothing bad in them. But, the sense being driven home here relates to the objective of their creation (*takwīn*) and introduction of these things - for that is nothing but good according to divine wisdom. However, the qualities of 'good' and 'bad' are attached to them in relation to the human acts and their effects on individuals. We can call it one's right or choice employed in doing something. Then, in those terms, everything is not good, in fact, it is circumscribed by a little detail, that is, whatever has not been allowed by Allah Ta'ālā is not good, but is, rather bad.' Allah knows best.

The sentence that follows next reads: وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ (and started the creation of man from clay - 7). Earlier, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā has made everything 'good' in this world. Mentioned thereafter was man,

the most beautiful of all. Then, to give expression to His most perfect power alongside, it was also said that the making of man as the most superior form of creation was not because the essential ingredient of his creation was most noble, elegant and superior, which may have made it so. In fact, as for the essential ingredient that went into his making, it was something as mean and lowly as the semen. Thereafter, the rest was a masterpiece of His perfect power and profound wisdom. It was this great combination that took something so low to such a height that man was rated as the most noble Divine creation.

Verses 10 - 22

وَقَالُوا ءِذَا ضَلَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۖ بَلْ هُمْ
بِلِقَائِ رَبِّهِمْ كَفِرُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ يَتَوَقَّبُكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ
بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُوا
رُءُوسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا
إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَآتَيْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدًىٰ وَلَٰكِن حَقَّ
الْقَوْلُ مِنِّي لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٣﴾
فَذُوقُوا بِمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا ۖ إِنَّا نَسِينَكُم وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ
الْخُلْدِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا
بِهَا خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَسَبَّحُوا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾
تَتَجَافَىٰ جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۚ وَمِمَّا
رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ ۚ
جَزَاءً مِّمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ أَفَمَن كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَن كَانَ
فَاسِقًا ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ أَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ
جَنَّاتُ الْمَأْوَىٰ نُزُلًا ۖ مِّمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا
فَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ ۖ كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَن يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَقِيلَ

لَهُمْ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَنَذِيقَنَّهُمْ
 مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢١﴾
 وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ ثُمَّ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا إِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ
 مُنْتَقِمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

And they said, "Is it that when we disappear in the earth, shall we really come into a new creation?" Rather they are ones who deny the meeting with their Lord. [10] Say, "The angel of death who has been assigned for you will take you in full, then you will be brought back to your Lord." [11] And (you will wonder) if you see the sinners hanging their heads before their Lord (and saying,) "Our Lord, we have now seen and heard, so send us back, and we will do righteous deeds. Surely, (now) we are believers." [12] And if We had so willed, We would have given everybody his right way (by force), but the word from Me had come to pass: "I will certainly fill the *Jahannam* with jinn and human beings together.: [13]

So, have a taste, because you had forgotten the meeting of this day of yours. We have forgotten you. And taste the eternal punishment for what you used to do. [14] Only those people believe in Our verses who, when they are reminded of them, fall in prostration and pronounce the purity with praise of their Lord, and they do not wax proud. [15] Their sides remain apart from their beds. They call their Lord with fear and hope, and spend from what We have given to them. [16] So no one knows what delight of eyes has been reserved for them in secret, as a reward of what they used to do. [17]

So, can one who is a believer become like one who is a sinner? They cannot become equal. [18] As for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them there are gardens to dwell, an honorable hospitality, for what they used to do. [19] And the ones who disobeyed, their abode is the Fire. Whenever they wish to come out from it, they will be turned back to it, and it will be said to them, "Taste the punishment of fire that you used to deny." [20] And We will certainly make them taste the nearer punishment before the greater punishment, so that they may return. [21] And who is more unjust than

the one who was reminded of the verses of his Lord, then he turned away from them. Surely, We have to take vengeance upon the sinners. [22]

Commentary

In verse 11, it was said: قُلْ يَتَوَفِّكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ (Say, "The angel of death who has been assigned for you will take you in full" - 11). In the verse previous to it, the deniers of the Qiyāmah were warned and an answer was given to their wondering as to how would they be brought back to life once again after they had died and become dust. In the verse cited above, such people are being reminded, 'Think of your death which is, in itself, a great manifestation of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. Your heedlessness and ignorance make you think that one's death comes all by itself, just like that. This is not how it is. In fact, fixed for your death there is a time with Allah and for this there is a standing system run through angels. Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام is the foremost among them, the one who is the master-manager of death throughout the world. Whenever and wherever a person is destined to die, it is precisely at that time that he draws out his soul from his body.' This is what has been stated in the cited verse. It should be noted that مَلَكَ الْمَوْتِ (*malakul-maut*: angel of death) has been mentioned in the singular form. It means Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام. Please compare it with another verse where it is said: الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّيْهُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ (the ones to whom the angels brought death - 16:28). Here, the word: مَلَائِكَةٍ (*malā'ikah*: angels) has been used in the plural form. This releases the hint that Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام does not do this alone. Many angels under him take part in accomplishing this duty.

Some details about the Exacting of Soul and the Angel of Death

Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid has said, 'before the angel of death, the whole world is very much like an open tray before a human being sprinkled in which there are grains and he picks up whichever he wants.' The same subject has also appeared in a *marfū' ḥadīth*, that is, traceable to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (As mentioned by al-Qurṭubī in At-tadhkirah)

According to a *ḥadīth*, once the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw the angel of death standing behind the head of an Anṣārī *ṣaḥābī* on his death bed. He said, 'make it easy on my *ṣaḥābī*.' The angel of death said, 'Rest assured. I make it easy on every believer,' then, he added, 'just imagine the number of people living in towns or villages and in forests, mountains or waters, I

see every one of them five times a day, therefore, I am directly acquainted with everyone of them, young or old.' Then, he concluded by saying, 'O Muḥammad ﷺ, all this I am telling you about is nothing but what happens with the will and command of Allah. Otherwise, if I wanted to take the life of even a mosquito, I do not have the power to do so - unless there comes the very command of Allah Ta'ālā that I have to do it.'

The soul of animals: Does the angel of death exact that too?

From the *ḥadīth* report mentioned above, it seems that it is the angel of death who, subject to Divine permission, exacts the soul of a mosquito too. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى has also said this while answering a question. But, some other reports show that this exacting of the soul is particular to human beings - because of their nobility and distinction. As for the animals, they will die under Divine will without the medium of the angel. (Mentioned by Ibn 'Atiyyah from al-Qurṭubī)

The same subject has been reported by Abū ash-Shaikh, 'Uqailī, Dailamī and others on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ narrating it from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. According to this report, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "All animals and insects keep glorifying Allah (for this is their life). When this glorification stops, Allah Ta'ālā takes their soul. The death of animals has not been entrusted with the angel of death". Another related *ḥadīth* has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ. (Maḥzarī)

It appears in yet another *ḥadīth*, 'when Allah Ta'ālā handed over to Sayyidnā 'Izrā'īل العیسی the charge of managing the death of everyone in the world, he pleaded, "O my Lord, You have put such a service in my charge that the entire race of the children of 'Ādam living in the world is going to give me a bad name to the extent that every time I am remembered, I shall be dubbed as evil." Allah Ta'ālā would say, "We have taken care of that by placing some obvious diseases and causes of death in the world due to which everyone will attribute death to these diseases and causes and you will remain safe from their adverse comments." (Al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr and Al-tadhkirah)

And Imām al-Baghawī reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "All diseases, and things like pain and wound, are the universal message-bearers of death. They remind every human being of his or her death. After that, when comes

the time of death, the angel of death turns towards the dying person and says, 'O servant of God, how many notices have I served on you and how many message-bearers have I sent to you one after the other! All these diseases and accidents delivered at your doors were simply to warn you that you should get ready for death. Now, here I am after whom no bearer of some message will come to you any more. Now you have got to say yes to the order of your Lord necessarily, whether willingly or unwillingly.' (Maḡharī)

Ruling:

The angel of death does not know the time of anyone's death in advance - until he is ordered to exact the soul of a certain person. (Deduced by Aḡmad and Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā from Ma'mar, Maḡharī)

Before approaching verse 16: تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا (Their sides remain apart from their beds. They call their Lord with fear and hope - 16), it should be borne in mind that disbelievers, Mushriks and the deniers of the day of Qiyāmah were warned in the verses previous to it. After that, starting from: إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا (Only those people believe in Our verses - 15) mentioned there are special attributes of sincere believers and the high ranks reserved for them. Pointed to in the cited verse is one such attribute of these believers: They leave the comfort of their beds, rise and get busy with the remembrance of Allah in submission and supplication - because, they are apprehensive of His displeasure and punishment while remaining hopeful of His mercy and reward. This very combination of fear and hope keeps them returning to Dhikr and Du'ā' repeatedly, anxiously and animated at the same time.

The Ṣalāh of Tahajjud

The majority of commentators takes the expression denoting the leaving of beds and getting busy with Dhikr and Du'ā' to mean the Ṣalāh of *Tahajjud* and *Nawāfil* that are offered after rising from sleep (which is the saying of al-Ḥasan, Muḡahid, Mālik and al-Awza'i). And it is supported by narrations of Ḥadīth as well.

According to a report in the Musnad of Aḡmad, at-Tirmidhī, an-Nasā'ī and others, Sayyidnā Mu'adh Ibn Jabal ؓ narrates: 'Once I was in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ on a journey. One morning during the course of the journey when I was near him, I requested: "Yā Rasūlallah,

tell me to do something which helps me enter Paradise and keeps me away from Hell." He said, "You asked for something very difficult. But, for whomsoever Allah Ta'ālā makes it easy, for him it becomes easy." Then he said, "This is what you should do: Worship Allah and associate no one with Him, and establish Ṣalāh, and pay Zakāh, and keep the fasts of Ramaḍān, and perform the Ḥajj of Baytullah." And then he said, "Here, now let me tell you about the gateways of righteousness: Fasting is a shield (that saves you from punishment). *Ṣadaqah* puts off the fire of one's sins - so does one's Ṣalāh in the middle of the night." And after having said that, he recited the cited verse of the Holy Qur'an: تَنَجَّاهُ عَنْ جُنُوبِهِمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ (Their sides remain apart from their beds - 16).

Sayyidnā Abū ad-Dardā', Qatādah and Ḍahhāk رضى الله عنهم اجمعين have said that this attribute of sides remaining apart from beds also applies to those who make their Ṣalāh of 'Ishā' with Jamā'ah and then go on to make their Ṣalāh of Fajr with Jamā'ah. And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه appearing in Tirmidhī with sound chains of authority, this verse: تَنَجَّاهُ عَنْ جُنُوبِهِمْ (Their sides remain apart) was revealed about people who do not sleep before the Ṣalāh of 'Ishā' and keep waiting for the Jamā'ah of 'Ishā'.

And according to some other reports, this verse is about people who offer *nawāfil* between Maghrib and 'Ishā' (reported by Muḥammad Ibn Naṣr). And about this verse, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: People who would, on waking up, remember Allah - lying, sitting and on sides - are also included therein.

Ibn Kathīr and other Tafsīr authorities have said that there is no contradiction in all these sayings. It is correct to say that this verse is inclusive of all - while the late night Ṣalāh remains the superior most. Bayān ul-Qur'an has also opted for this approach.

And Sayyidah Asmā' bint Yazīd رضى الله عنها narrates: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'when Allah Ta'ālā will gather everyone from the first to the last, a proclaimer whose call will be heard by the entire creation will call: 'This day everyone on the plains of Resurrection will find out as to who is really deserving of honor and compliment.' Then, the proclaiming angel will proclaim: 'O people assembled on the plains of Resurrection, let those rise from among you, those whose attribute was: تَنَجَّاهُ عَنْ جُنُوبِهِمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ

الْمَضَاجِعِ (Their sides remain apart from their beds - 16)'. At this call, these people will stand up, though their number will be small. (Ibn Kathīr) And some words of the same narration say that these people will be sent to Paradise without reckoning. After that, all others will stand and face reckoning. (Maṣḥarī)

In verse 21:

وَلَنَذِيقَنَّهُم مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

(And We will certainly make them taste the nearer punishment before the greater punishment, so that they may return),

the word: *أَدْنَىٰ* (*adnā*) has been used in the sense of 'nearer' and العذاب الأدنى (*al-'adhāb-ul-adnā*) denotes diseases, sufferings and calamities of the world that are made to befall a lot of people by Allah Ta'ālā in order to warn them against their sins. The purpose is to chasten and alert them enough so that they leave off their sins and thus earn their deliverance from the Great Punishment of the Hereafter.

Hence, this verse seems to tell us that all these sufferings, accidents, diseases and pains that inflict sinners in the world are nothing but a sort of mercy for them in as much as they help them get out of their heedlessness and save themselves from the punishment of the 'Ākhirah. However, for people who take no lesson even from such unwelcome happenings and fail to turn to Allah, for them, this punishment becomes twofold - first, the cash punishment right here in this world and then, the other being the Great Punishment of the Hereafter. As for the hardships of many kinds that come upon prophets and men of Allah, that is a separate matter. These hardships are a trial for them and trials are the source through which their ranks are raised. What is the hallmark of this trial? How do you recognize the quality of their response? If one were to observe such people even under the stress of calamities and hardships, it will be noticed that they have a kind of peace and tranquility emanating from their trust in Allah Ta'ālā. And it is Allah who knows best.

There are some crimes the punishment of which comes even within the mortal world much before the Hereafter.

The last sentence of the set of verses cited above reads: *إِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُنتَقِمُونَ* (We have to take vengeance upon the sinners - 22). Obviously, the word: *الْمُجْرِمِينَ* (*al-mujrimīn*: the criminals) includes all kinds of criminals.

Then, the word: *إِنْتِقَام* (*intiqām*: revenge, retribution, return) is also general. It may be in the mortal world or in the Hereafter or in both. But, from some Ḥadith accounts it appears that there are three sins the punishment of which is experienced - before the Hereafter - right here in this world too. They are: (1) To strive against what is Right and True publicly with flags and slogans; (2) To disobey parents; (3) To help someone unjust or oppressive. (Reported by Ibn Jarīr from Sayyidnā Mu'adh Ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه)

Verses 23 - 30

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَلَا تَكُنْ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَائِهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسْكِينِهِمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً أَفَلَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَسُوقُ الْمَاءَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الْجُرْزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا تَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ أَنْعَامُهُمْ وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ أَفَلَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْفَتْحُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِيمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُمْ وَانْتَظَرِ إِنَّهُمْ مُّنتَظَرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And We did give the Book to Mūsā, so do not be in doubt about receiving it, and We made it a guidance for the children of Isra'īl. [23] And We appointed leaders from among them who guided (people) under Our command, when they observed patience, and kept firm belief in Our verses. [24] Surely, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgment in what they used to differ. [25] Has it not been a source of guidance for them as to how many generations We have destroyed before them who used to walk in their dwellings? Surely in this there are signs. So, do they not listen? [26] Have

they not seen that We drive water to the dry land, then We bring forth crops thereby from which their cattle and they themselves have food? So, do they not observe? [27] And they say, "When will this decision take place?" [28] Say, "On the day of decision their belief will not be of any use to disbelievers, nor shall they be given any respite." [29] So, turn away from them and wait. They (too) are waiting. [30]

Commentary

The word: لقاء (*liqā'*) in the first verse (23) cited above: فَلَا تَكُنْ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَائِهِ (so do not be in doubt about receiving it) means meeting. Whose meeting with whom? In determining it precisely in the verse, the sayings of commentators differ. According to one of these, the pronoun in: لِّقَائِهِ (*liqā'ihī*) has been taken to be reverting to: الْكِتَاب (al-*kitāb*: the Book), that is, the Qur'ān, which releases the sense that 'the way Allah Ta'ālā gave the Book to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, you too should entertain no doubt about receiving your Book.' This is supported by similar words used about the Qur'ān in another verse: وَإِنَّكَ لَتَلْقَى الْقُرْآنَ (And indeed you [O Muḥammad] do receive the Qur'ān - An-Naml, 27:6) (Bayān ul-Qur'ān, Khulāṣah Tafsīr)

On the other hand, its *tafsīr* from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah رضي الله عنهم اجمعين has been reported as follows: The pronoun in: لِّقَائِهِ (*liqā'ihī*: read as 'meeting him') reverts to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and given in this verse is the news that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be meeting Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and it has been said that he should have no doubt in the eventuality of his meeting with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Accordingly, a meeting in the night of al-Mi'rāj (the ascent to the heavens) stands proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth. Then, also proved is the meeting on the day of Qiyāmah.

And Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى explains it by saying: The way Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was given a Book, then people belied and harassed him, the prophet of Islam too should anticipate that he will have to face similar treatment at the hands of his people. Therefore, he should not grieve over the pains inflicted by disbelievers. In fact, he should take that as the blessed practice of prophets, and endure.

Two conditions for the leader of any people

In the next verse (24), it was said:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ إِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا تَوَكَّلُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ

(And We appointed leaders from among them who guided (people) under Our command, when they observed patience, and kept firm belief in Our verses).

In this verse, two reasons have been given as to why religious leadership was bestowed on some of the sages of Banī Isrā'īl: (1) Observance of patience and (2) the certitude of Divine words. In terms of the Arabic usage, the sense of doing *ṣabr* or patience is very wide and general. Literally, it means to tie or to be firm. At this place, *ṣabr* means to stay firm on the implementation of Divine injunctions and to hold one's desiring self in check against the infringement of what Allah Ta'ālā has declared to be *ḥarām* (unlawful) or *makrūh* (reprehensible). This covers one's obedience to all injunctions of the Shari'ah which is pragmatic perfection at its best. The second reason lies in their certitude - they are certain of the Divine words. This includes the initial understanding of the sense of the verses as well as the resulting certitude which emerges from such comprehension - both. This is intellectual perfection at its best.

In short, in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, only those who are perfect both in '*ilm* (knowledge) and '*amal* (practice) are worthy of religious leadership. It is interesting here that perfection in practice has been made to precede perfection in knowledge while, usually '*ilm* (knowledge) precedes '*amal* (practice). This arrangement releases a strong hint, that is, a knowledge which has no corresponding practice with it is just not credible in the sight of Allah.

Ibn Kathīr has reported the following saying of some 'Ulamā' in his *tafsīr* of this verse:

بِالصَّبْرِ وَالْيَقِينِ تُنَالُ الْإِمَامَةُ فِي الدِّينِ

One can arrive at the station of leadership in religion only through *ṣabr* (patience) and *yaqīn* (certitude).

The word: جُرُزُ (*al-juruz*) in verse 27: أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَسُوقُ الْمَاءَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا (Have they not seen that We drive water to the dry land, then We bring forth crops thereby - 27) means barren land where trees do not grow.

A wise system of irrigation

Usually the Qur'ān mentions the irrigating of dry lands and the

growing of crops therein by saying that the land receives rain, and becomes moist and growth-worthy. But, there is no mention of rain in this verse. Instead of that, it has been said that water itself is directed to move aground towards the dry land and thereby bring forth the growth of trees. In other words, the rain is made to fall on some other land and it is from there that water is directed to move in the form of carrier channels on the ground all the way to the dry land that receives no rain.

There is a hint embedded here. Some lands are so soft that they cannot withstand rains. If regular rains were made to fall there, buildings may collapse or trees may be uprooted. Therefore, nature has made its own arrangements for such lands. As for the rain itself, it is sent on a land which is capable of holding it. After that, water is made to flow from here all the way to such lands which cannot withstand rains - like the land of Egypt. And there are commentators who have pointed out to some lands of Yaman and Syria as being referred to in this verse. (as reported from Ibn 'Abbās and Al-Ḥasan)

And as for the correct position, this subject includes all such lands, with the inclusion of the land of Egypt known for scanty rains particularly. But, water from the rains in the Abyssinian territory of Africa comes into Egypt through the Nile bringing with it particles of the indigenous red soil which is good for the growth of crops. Therefore, the people of Egypt, despite that they have no rains in their country, do benefit by a supply of new water and soil every year. **فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ** (So, glorious is Allah, the Best of creators - 23:14).

Verse 28 carries a question posed by disbelievers: **وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْفَتْحُ** (And they say, "When will this decision take place?") Here, they are referring to the victory of believers against disbelievers as promised by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and are wondering about it since they see no traces of this likelihood anywhere around. Instead, they see Muslims as a group of people, scared, hiding,

To answer that, Allah Ta'ala said: **قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِيمَانُهُمْ** (Say, 'On the day of decision their belief will not be of any use to disbelievers,' - 29) This amounts to saying: Why are you asking us about the day of our victory while that day is going to be a day of trouble for you? When victory comes to us, you would have already been overtaken by

punishment. May be, right here in this world - as it happened in the battle of *Badr* - or, in the Hereafter. And when the punishment of Allah seizes someone, then, no profession of faith at that time, no declaration of *Īmān* at that stage is accepted. (as mentioned by Ibn Kathīr)

There are some others who have interpreted the 'day' in: مَتَى هَذَا الْفَتْحُ ("When will this decision take place?") as the day of Qiyāmah. The summarized explanation of this verse in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān appearing in the original edition of Ma'ārif-ul-Qur'ān is based on this *tafsīr*. (The translation of *al-fath* as 'decision' as given in the text admits both probabilities)

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah As-Sajdah
Ends here.